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My present wish (*entre Nous*) is to go round with the fleet to the Southward—how far I will be able to effect this purpose is not yet determined, at all events I will be in Philadelphia in the course of the Winter—and should the Armies remain quiet should Congress think I may serve them in Europe, I shall be happy to cross, and recross the Atlantic in the space of a few months provided I see my going there may be materialy serviceable—that is, my dear Sir, the present plan I have in view, and whatever may be the wishes of Congress, nothing on my part will be neglected to render them my services. At all events I shall endeavor to pay a visit to my Friends in Boston—the attachment, and partiality I feel for that Capital can not be sufficiently expressed—I set such a value by the esteem of your Countrymen that it will ever animate me under every difficulty I may encounter, their reception on my return from France, and the many favors I have received from the people at large, and from individuals in particular, shall ever be precious to my heart.

Mr. Cooper is returning to Boston, and hopes to be exchanged. I am very desirous to see every particular respecting Halifax Newfoundland and Penobscot—I request you will take some pains on this head—and send the accounts to me at Philadelphia under cover of the Massachusetts Delegates. It is very well worth sending an express on purpose and I would wish to know what Expedition you think might (for next campaign) become most agreeable to your State—

Present my best compliments to the Governor and his Lady, Mr. Baudouin Mr. Cushing and all our friends—remember me most affectionately to your family and believe me

Yours for ever

LAFAYETTE.

4. A Letter of Alexander H. Stephens, 1854.

THE original of the following letter is the property of Miss Martha Reid Robinson of Chicago. It was written to her grandfather, Colonel Robert Sims Burch, who studied law with Mr. Stephens, and was afterwards for some time in partnership with him in Crawfordville, Georgia. At the time when the letter was written, Colonel Burch lived in Marietta, Georgia.

J. F. J.

WASHINGTON D C

15th June 1854

Dear Bob

Your letter of the 12th Inst was received this morning. I was at home last week, and last Sunday was a week I spent at Atlanta. I thought of you often on that day and if I had been right sure of your being at home I should have spent the day with you instead of spending it where I did. But I feared I might have my ride up to Marietta only to meet with a disappointment and as it was I made out luckily to pass the day most

agreeably with our old friend Floyd Mims.¹ Much of the time was taken up in talking over scenes which now exist only in memory. I *intend* however to see you this summer some time. I am now in good health—that is good for me. I am hardly ever in such condition or state of feeling as would warrant me in saying that I am well. With me in this particular I always have to speak in a comparative sense. I am therefore and with this explanation gratified at being able to say that I am a good deal stronger and feeling a good deal better than when I saw you last.

As to that part of your letter which bears upon the political prospects of the country etc I can only say that every thing here now on such questions is completely at sea. There are really no parties in this country. There are persons calling themselves Whigs and others calling themselves Democrats but these terms do not designate in the slightest degree classes of men agreeing upon any of the public questions or issues of this day. What is to turn up in the future I can not tell. My opinion is that Parties must form upon questions and it is idle and futile to attempt to keep up these old unmeaning designations which had their day with the questions that brought them into being. I don't think it proper at this time to take any lead towards the formation of new parties—"sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." I would support Dickinson upon present questions and as he now stands before the country with a great deal of pleasure. But whether he will be a candidate or how he may stand upon the questions before the country two years hence I have no idea. In reference to *myself* however I must say that no inducement on earth could prevail on me to allow my name to be connected with either of the offices—that of President or Vice President. I have no ambition that way. I want no office in the world. I hold my present place rather against than in accordance with my wishes. Nothing but a sense of duty or the belief that I might do the country some service induced me to run the last time. This may seem strange to you and I would not so write to hardly any other man because I know that human nature is such that I should not be credited in the declaration. But I believe you know me well enough to do me the justice to give me credit for sincerity in making the statement.

My sole object here now is to serve the country. I have little or no confidence in Parties as such of any name or style. And I think the less a public man is trammelled by them the more efficient he is to do good. Since the triumph of the Nebraska Bill I feel as if the *Mission* of my life was performed. The retrospect for the last ten years since I have been on this *theatre* to me is most gratifying. When I think of the state of the country then and now—the nature of the principles and issue between the two great sections of the Union growing out of the institution of Slavery and upon which the peace harmony and even existence of the Union depended and my own connection with the settlement of those principles upon several most critical occasions in that period—the review

¹ John Floyd Mims, agent of the Georgia Railroad at Atlanta, and mayor of that city in 1853.

is as pleasing and as joyous as it is for the Storm tossed mariner to gaze in delight upon the bow of promise arching in its gorgeous brilliancy the blackened elements of the tempest cloud as it passes over with its fury spent leaving him with rudder safe, masts erect and sails untattered and untorn to bear him still onward to his destined Haven. This contemplation is the more particularly gratifying to me for some reasons you will allow me to mention. In the first place duty as I understood it required me on several occasions to assume positions not only against the prevailing opinions in our section of the country upon the issues presented while this contest or slavery controversy was raging but against the judgment of some of my best friends. This was very painful to me. But I looked alone to the future for my vindication. I knew I was then misunderstood but I felt an inward assurance that *time* would bring all things right. That future to which I looked has come. That time which I trusted has done its work. And when the signal guns upon Capitol Hill proclaimed the final passing of the Nebraska Bill I felt that the cup of my ambition was full. And to be a little more specific in the reasons to which I have alluded I will state what you may well recollect.

Ten years ago, the first Session of Congress after I took my seat the Texas question was started. The subject was brought forward by Mr. Tyler under the guidance of Mr. Calhoun secretary of state in the form of a treaty with Texas. That treaty stipulated for the *cession of Texas* as a *territory* of the United States to be held as the other *territories* of the General Government and without any *guaranty* or *security* against the exclusion of Slavery therein by Congress. It also provided for the payment of the debts of Texas to which I was opposed. But the main point with me was the absence of any *provision settling the Slavery question* to which the measure gave rise. On this ground I opposed it. It was with me a controlling point. Because at the North *Annexation* was *zealously* espoused by those who openly declared their intention of making it *free* territory or in other words of excluding the Southern people from carrying their slaves there, this *ground* of opposition on my part was asserted throughout the state to be nothing but a *pretext*. I was charged with being opposed to the acquisition. And it was in vain that every where I declared myself in favour of the acquisition upon such terms as would give the South security. It was again and again asserted that I was demanding what I knew could never be obtained. I insisted that we should accept no terms of annexation that did not *secure* in the bonds of union the right of all states that might be formed out of the territory South of 36.30 the line established in 1820 to come into the Union with Slavery if they saw fit. This it was said was equivalent to open *hostility* to annexation and I was accordingly charged with being an enemy to Texas annexation. This to me was *painful*. For there was not a man perhaps in Georgia more in favour of annexation upon safe terms than myself. This was the first great sectional struggle after I came to Congress. I *maintained* my position. I withstood the assaults upon my motives and patriotism. And to my gratification then I succeeded with

six other Southern men who acted with me in defeating any scheme of annexation which did not contain the guaranty that I demanded. And when the friends of annexation North and South found that they could carry no other measure they were compelled to take the plan advocated by me. And the Resolutions drawn up by Milton Brown of *Tennessee* after consultation and advisement with me *exactly* on the basis I had maintained throughout Georgia in the canvass of 1844 were finally passed and became the bond of Union between the two Republicks. There were no afterclaps. The slavery question involved was settled and put to rest in the very terms of the Union between the two countries. This I say was the first contest between the North and the South after I came to Congress. The next grew out of our Mexican acquisitions. That was much the fiercest and became much the most dangerous because this question was not settled at the time of the acquisition as it ought to have been. The part I took in that contest was also much the most dangerous and perilous to me personally. The danger and peril I met. The whole South, nearly, again under the lead of Mr. Calhoun, had agreed, after the strife had become threatening, to what was called the Clayton Compromise. This was a Bill introduced in the Senate in 1848 providing for the establishment of territorial Governments for the country acquired from Mexico by the treaty of Peace of that year and Oregon.

The North had for several years claimed the right and power to exclude Slavery from all these common territories. This Legislative exclusion under the lead of Mr. *Wilmot* had passed the House every time it had been offered. The right thus to exclude by Congress was almost universally denied by the South. But besides this difference there was still another point of disagreement. I *believed and knew* that upon the acquisition all the laws of the Country ceded which were not *inconsistent* with the Constitution of the United States would continue in force until changed or modified by the lawmaking power of the new sovereign to whom it was transferred. I knew also that Slavery had been abolished by law throughout the Mexican territories before the cession. We got the country therefore with a positive exclusion of Slavery by law at the time of acquisition. This exclusion I insisted should be taken off or provided against by Congress so that the South might have some participation in this vast region of public domain. But in this position I stood almost alone in the entire South. And at this stage of the controversy Mr. Claytons Compromise was agreed upon in the Senate. It abstained from a positive exclusion of Slavery by Congress. In other words it *omitted* the Wilmot Proviso upon which the North had insisted with such pertinacity and *referred* the question as to whether the Mexican *antislavery law* had been rendered null and void by the operation of the Constitution of the United States alone or not to the Supreme Court of the United States. Their decision was to be final. If they should decide that the Constitution by *itself* without any *legislative act* did not change, repeal, or modify an existing local law of that nature and character then the South was to be *forever* excluded from the territory thus

acquired. And the Bill further provided that neither Congress or the people of the territories should ever pass any law either establishing or prohibiting slavery therein. The *status* of the country was to remain *forever* as it was at the time of the acquisition upon the subject of slavery except in so far as the Constitution by itself without any exercise of the legislative power under it had changed or altered it. This was the Clayton Compromise. The whole South nearly hailed it as a *triumph*. I looked upon it as worse than the "*Wilmot Proviso*." For if the Wilmot Proviso was *unconstitutional* as was held generally by the advocates of this Bill the Supreme Court would so hold anyhow. So no harm could come of that if our rights were in any event to be left to them in the last resort. But in case the Supreme Court decided as I had no doubt they would that the Constitution by itself neither established or abolished slavery anywhere that it simply protected and guaranteed its enjoyment in all parts of the Union, territories as well as States where it was not *prohibited* by the law of the place—I say in case the Supreme Court so held then by the terms of this Clayton Compromise the power or right to change the *status* of the Country or the law of the place in this particular was denied by an express clause both to Congress and the people of the territories. It was this Bill you know I was so bitterly denounced for defeating. On my motion it was laid on the table in the House after it was passed by the Senate. I was called a *traitor* an *Arnold* etc. I was asked if I had any hopes of ever getting a better Compromise even by friends who did not like it very well themselves. I stood this and a great deal more but not without the shedding of some blood. I stood it all nevertheless however looking to that future of which I have just spoken. Time rolled on—

"Men change with fortune, manners change with climes,
Tenets with books and *principles with times*."

My *justification* came sooner than I expected. For in little over two years I lived to hear men demanding a repeal of the Mexican anti-slavery law, which they had denounced me as a traitor for saying existed! But this is not all. The question was again up in Congress. The strife raged hotter and fiercer than ever. I was willing to divide the country on the line of 36.30, the same which was fixed on the acquisition of Texas, with a recognition of our rights south of that line. This the North would not grant and a majority of the South also opposed upon *constitutional grounds*. I need go no further into detail. Suffice it to say that if the South had then stood by me we should have got a clear and unequivocal repeal of the Anti Slavery law existing in the territories at the time of the acquisition. But as it was we got the guaranty that the people when they come to form state Constitutions should come into the Union either with or without slavery as they may determine for themselves. This guaranty was not confined or limited to territories South of 36.30 but up to the 42d North latitude. We got the right secured to the people of the territories of Utah and New Mexico to change the anti

slavery law of those territories if they saw fit to do so, and under which right secured the people of Utah have recognized slavery in their system. New Mexico I have little doubt will also do the same. But the great principle established in 1850 was that there should be no Congressional restriction or exclusion of Slavery in the territories of the Union, and that new states shall come into the Union either with or without Slavery as the people in forming their state constitutions shall determine for themselves. This was the principle established in 1850. The *restriction* in 1820 was inconsistent with that and hence when we came this year to organize Govmts for Kansas and Nebraska we demanded—I demanded—that this principle should be recognized and carried out and the restriction of 1820 declared null and void. It has been done. Are we not in a much better condition today than we were in 1843 when I took my seat on the floor of the House—I mean the South? Are we not in an *infinitely* better condition than we would have been in if the Clayton Compromise had been adopted? May I not look back and proudly demand of my bitterest assailants whether time has not shown that I was right and they were wrong? Could or ought ambition to ask or desire more? But I have done. You must excuse this long scroll. When I commenced it I had no idea of filling one sheet. I have just run on as I might *talk* to you if I were with you and to nobody else. You know there are certain things with [which] everybody treasures up in the heart which are communicated to but few. So it is with me today towards you. I would not so express myself as I have to you to hardly any other person for various reasons. In the first place it might be thought that I treasured ill will towards those who thought differently from me in days gone by upon issues now past, when in fact I have no such feelings. Nor have I any wish to exult in a triumph which would awaken unpleasant reminiscences. Conscious all the time of being in pursuit of the right and nothing but the right I am amply rewarded by seeing the right triumphant in the end. I barely intended to say to you that I have no desire to build up *parties* as such. All combinations of men have a tendency in themselves to grow corrupt. And the best position for every honest man in public position especially is to have as few party obligations to fulfil as possible. I trust for the *honor* to say nothing of the safety of the South that there never will be another affiliation on the part of any portion of her people with the Northern Whig Party constituted as it now is. And I trust also that no portion of the Southern people will ever again go into any National Convention to nominate candidates for President and Vice President with any Party which does not first *purge* itself of all *freesoil* elements. This is what I wanted done in 1852. The country is in better condition for this plan or *reorganization* than it has ever been before. Mr. Pierce is a good, social, clever gentleman, *individually* sound and right upon all these questions. But he will not make them a *test*. The consequence will be that he will fall. His administration is now powerless. His cabinet is divided. He was for Nebraska, but those democrats at the North who have received the

largest amount of patronage for their friends went against it. Marcy I have no doubt was hostile to the bill. Mr. Pierce is also for Cuba. But Marcy is not. And I fear that the South will be "gulled" by him on that question. As for myself I am for Cuba, and I think if our citizens see fit to go and rescue the Island from Spanish misrule and English abolition policy they ought not to be *punished* by us for so doing. In other words I am for repealing our laws which make it a misdemeanor and punishable to take part in such a struggle as it is believed will take place there between the planters and the Govmt before the legislative decree goes into effect in August next. If the people then resist I am for aiding them. It will be another St. Domingo struggle and any American in my opinion should feel a sympathy for his own race. I am against Cuba's becoming a *negroe state*. But again enough. Excuse my haste. I have but a few moments to scribble you these lines. I hope to see you before many months and talk over these things. But I must repeat once more that my strong desire is to get out of this bustle and retire to the quiet and repose of my own sequestered home and leave the world to take [care] of itself.

My best respects to Mrs. Burch and kind regards to all the family.

Yours most sincerely

ALEXANDER H STEPHENS

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Marietta
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